

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6505

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY KIGALI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 1016

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, EAID, US, BY

SUBJECT: FAREWELL CONVERSATIONS WITH TOP BURUNDIAN OFFICIALS

1. IN FAIRLY LENGTHY SEPARATE FAREWELL CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT BAGAZA, PRIME MINISTER NZAMBIMANA, AND FOREIGN MINISTER MUGANGA, IT IS APPARENT THAT ALL OF THEM BELIEVE THAT BURUNDI IS TURNING A NEW AND MUCH MORE PROMISING LEAF IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES. AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON NZEYIMANA, WHO IS CURRENTLY VISITING HERE, HAS ALSO SEEN BAGAZA AND CONFIRMS THIS CONCLUSION, IN NOTING THAT, AT LAST, BURUNDI SEEMS TO HAVE SLID INTO SAME BASKET AS MOST OTHER COMPARABLE AFRICAN NATIONS, AS FAR AS AMERICAN POLICY AND AID ARE CONCERNED.

2. I MYSELF STRESSED THAT WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY SINCE THE DARK DAYS OF THE 1972 BLOODSHED, AND THAT BAGAZA'S NEW REGIME DESERVES MUCH CREDIT FOR THE ASCENDING TREND, AS NOTED IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S NATIONAL DAY MESSAGE TO BAGAZA ON JULY ONE. I HAVE REHEARSED THE PROBABLE UPWARD COURSE OF USAID ACTIVITIES HERE OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS, AND NOTED THAT MANY OTHER POSSIBILITIES OF COOPERATION SHOULD ALSO PRESENT THEMSELVES.

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3. AT THE SAME TIME, I HAVE POINTED OUT THAT THE FRIENDLINESS WHICH I NOW SENSE AT THE TOP OF THE REGIME IS OFTEN NOT RPT NOT DUPLICATED AT MIDDLE AND LOWER LEVELS. THERE, DOUBTS AND SUSPICIONS FROM THE PAST FREQUENTLY SHOW UP IN HESITATIONS TO WORK CLOSELY WITH US OR TO ACCEPT OUR OFFERS OF USEFUL ASSISTANCE (E.G., PEACE CORPS). OCCASIONAL TIRADES AGAINST US IN THE MEDIA,

SUCH AS ON THE KOREAN ISSUE, ONLY REINFORCE POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS AND CAN ONLY HARM THE GENERALLY POSITIVE TREND. (MUGANGA SAID HE HAD ASKED FOR A REPORT ON A JULY INTERVIEW BY BUJUMBURA'S MAYOR IN WHICH HE HURLED EPITHETS AT US OVER KOREA, SINCE HE, MUGANGA, HAD BEEN ABROAD AT THE TIME.)

4. I SUGGESTED THAT BAGAZA OR NZAMBIMANA ISSUE A CIRCULAR TO ALL MINISTRIES AND SENIOR FUNCTIONARIES, WHICH MADE CLEAR THAT BAD TIMES ARE OVER BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND THAT COLLABORATION WITH THE U.S. IS AS FITTING AS WITH THE WEST EUROPEANS. I SAID FRANKLY INEFFICIENT BURUNDIAN BUREAUCRACY MADE ENOUGH DIFFICULTIES WITHOUT THE ADDITIONAL BURDEN ON COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES OF POLITICAL ANIMOSITIES WHICH HAD NO FURTHER BASIS FOR EXISTENCE.

5. BAGAZA RESPONDED THAT HE THOUGHT MOST OF MY CONCERNS WERE CAUSED BY POORLY TRAINED BUREAUCRATS WITHOUT POLITICAL MOTIVES. HE WAS CONVINCED OF THE NEW ADMINISTRATION'S FRIENDLY FEELINGS FOR BURUNDI, AND OF ITS GOOD INTENTIONS IN AFRICA. OF COURSE, BURUNDI WAS HAVING ITS OWN DOMESTIC TROUBLES NOW, AND THESE UNCERTAINTIES MIGHT BE FELT BY THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS. AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, HE WAS IN GOOD CONTROL OF THE SITUATION, NOT RPT NOT "THE OPPOSITION", AND BURUNDI WOULD CONTINUE ON ITS CURRENT PATH.

6. NZAMBIMANA, AS HE HAS BEFORE, WAS MORE READY TO ADMIT THE WEIGHT OF PAST BAD FEELINGS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, BUT HE WAS CONFIDENTIAL

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POSITIVE THAT A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE HAD OCCURRED DURING MY THREE YEARS IN BUJUMBURA. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT RPT NOT ISSUE A CIRCULAR INSTRUCTION TO "BE NICE TO THE AMERICANS", BUT HE WOULD SEE TO IT THAT THE WORD GOT AROUND THAT A NEW ERA HAD DOWNED. (WE WILL HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE ON THIS, BUT, AT LEAST WITH THE SECURITY SERVICE, THIS IS ALREADY TRUE.)

7. MUGANGA IN HIS FAREWELL LUNCHEON TOAST WAS UNUSUALLY EFFUSIVE ON THE PROPECTS FOR CORDIAL TIES. PRIVATELY HE SAID THAT AS MORE AND MORE BURUNDIANS BECAME AWARE OF AMERICAN ACTIVITIES HERE, ATTITUDES WERE SURE TO BECOME AS GOOD AS THEY ARE ALREADY AT TOP.

8. WHILE I THINK BURUNDI'S PRESENT LEADERS ARE BASICALLY SINCERE IN THEIR CURRENT EXPRESSIONS OF GOOD WILL, A BIG JOB STILL REMAINS TO BE DONE TO TRANSLATE THIS INTO CONCRETE HELP FOR US NOW AND THEN ON MULTILATERAL AND AFRICAN ISSUES. CERTAINLY, HOWEVER, THE ERA OF OUR WORST PROBLEMS NOW SEEMS WELL PAST.
MARK

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